

# MDOCS

JOHN B. MOORE DOCUMENTARY STUDIES COLLABORATIVE

Fall 2014, 1.6



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A Bi-weekly Newsletter

## Jocelyn Arem – *From Archive to Multimedia Memory Project*

### What's in your attic?

Next semester, **Jocelyn Arem '04**, folklorist, musician, and director of the Caffè Lena History Project, will lead a series of workshops as part of a Carr Residency and collaboration between MDOCS and Special Programs. The workshops, will center on how to build and draw on a multimedia archive for community memory projects.

As an earlier MDOCS planning session revealed, many Skidmore faculty and Saratoga community members already have *great* ideas for memory projects—plus stacks of boxes of unsorted archival material. What they wanted was guidance on where to start.

With her experience in music archives, Arem is the perfect guide to strengthen the Skidmore-Saratoga Memory Project.

On Friday, December 5, Arem visited campus to outline ideas for the spring workshops ("From Buried Treasure to Books".) She proposed three sessions to assist faculty, students, and the community in going from finding an idea to telling a story with confidence & evidence.

The first workshop will help identify a project's scope and lay out a plan, while the second will consider how to acquire and manage resources. The third will discuss how to effectively present findings and engage the community.

Arem brainstormed with a multi-interest group including (to name a few) faculty and students from American Studies, Social Work, and Arts Administration, staff from Special Programs, Academic Technologies and Communications, and community partners from the Saratoga Springs Public Library,

Senior Center, Economic Opportunity Council and Film Forum. It didn't hurt to have two more alumni and partners in the room—City Historian Mary-Ann Fitzgerald, UWW, & County Historian Lauren Roberts, '04.

Participants welcomed Arem's emphasis on the importance of interdisciplinarity, of bringing many voices to archival projects, and of building connections between the past and the present, and students, faculty and community.

Heads nodded when Arem urged those making a memory project to draw on their own strengths—for example, she is a musician and writer, so the Caffè Lena History Project manifested as a coffee table book and CD set.

All of us at MDOCS are extremely excited to see how these Skidmore-Saratoga Memory projects will come to life in the spring.

Have a buried treasure of your own? Please join the conversation (dates, p 2)!

-Lisa Fierstein '16

### Inside This Issue:

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- **Documentarians on Campus:** David Gyscek, Art Department

**Plus:** Dates & Events for Spring 2015



## Director's Note

It's hard to believe that only three months ago, MDOCS was still just a set of great ideas waiting to take shape. Since September, it's been (in Saratoga Springs terms) a horse race, but an enjoyable one. We've consulted on everything from tech to inclusivity, run workshops, put Documentary Studies courses into the college catalog (and pretty much filled spring '15's offerings!), brought students into the conversation, and hosted world-renowned and award-winning documentarians working in film, audio and multimedia. Skidmore colleagues have even shared their own documentary work.

Alumni with a taste for documentary have started to connect (notably Noah Throop '14, and Jocelyn Arem '04). Throop helped us focus on paths after Skidmore and (with a Carr Residency on the horizon for spring) Arem will offer guidance on how to build community partnerships and archives and how to work in collaborations to support documentary work among all kinds of communities. We look forward to deepening our ties with this group in the coming months.

More is on the horizon. We're gearing up so everyone has access to tools and technology to tell their own stories. We're partnering with Project Vis, with faculty working on Middle East, Latin America and Asia to encourage documentary presentations and work with an international focus, and student clubs. We hope to support faculty teaching across the disciplines who need a workshop to get students started in everything from audio recording to project film editing.

And there's more! We are planning presentations by alumni and local documentarian in spring; work ranges from science exhibition to documenting Honduran marginalized communities to women's lives (more as details firm up). Classes are going to hang exhibits, run film festivals, get audio and video skills, and more. As LI 113 enters its second semester, an MDOCS/Project Vis Mellon Fellow will take up residence and provide additional support to students, programming and imagining a vibrant documentary presence here on campus. Adam Tinkle (OP/Music) will lead AM/FM: Make Your Own Radio Show campus/community workshops. And planning summer 2015's Storytellers' Institute & courses is underway. We look forward to seeing you in the new year and (as always!) hearing how MDOCS can serve your program!

--- J. Dym

## Spring in LI 113

*Doc Dates: Wednesdays, 3:30-5*

Conversations, workshops and presentations on documentary.

*AM/FM Radio Workshops*

Adam Tinkle leads "Make Your Own Radio Show" community workshops on first Mondays

*MDOCS Workshops*

Get a taste of the documentary arts with a few introductory sessions. February '15 calendar coming in January!

### In the works

We'll have the details in spring semester, but keep an eye out for

- Designing science exhibits
- Documenting 20<sup>th</sup> c. women
- Matching oral histories to images
- Where History Happens

AND....

### Spring 2015

#### Carr Distinguished Lecturer

(presented by  
Special Programs/MDOCS)

**Jocelyn Arem, '04**

#### The Multimedia Community Archive

January 30, March 27, & February 27  
& an evening performance!



Arem, Fierstein & M-A. Fitzgerald, 12/5

## Skidmore Storytellers' Institute



Not sure what how to spend your summer? Looking to do something fun *and* rewarding?

### Have no fear!

This summer, from **June 1<sup>st</sup> - July 2<sup>nd</sup>**, Skidmore will host its very first **Storytellers' Institute** sponsored by **MDOCS**.

Get ready for five lively weeks of thought-provoking conversation, work-shopping, and creation!

The theme for our inaugural institute is **family**. The individual stories of family life have offered storytellers of both fact and fiction a lens to interrogate unique cases, or to demonstrate the workings of an entire society.

This program is open to Skidmore students and faculty, documentary professionals, and the broader Saratoga community. For more information about stipends and the application process, please visit the [MDOCS](#) website.

## Noah Throop: From School to Studio



Sometimes hard work pays off.

As he explained during a November Doc Date in LI 113, Noah Throop, '14, is finding his way in the filmmaking world a few months after graduation. This fall Throop interned for PBS' Point of View (POV), an acclaimed television showcase for documentary film, with over 300 presentations to date.

Throop has completed several short films, including two he presented: [Home](#) and

[Where the Food Grows](#). For [Home](#) Throop accompanied Steve Otrembiak (Media Services, retired; pictured with Throop) on a mental journey exploring home and family at his family farm just a few miles from campus. Filmed while Throop studied in Australia, [Where the Food Grows](#) examines agriculture and the food industry in a documentary portrait of a small family farm in Byron Bay, NSW Australia.

Throop's Skidmore influences include Tom Lewis (English) and Deb Hall (Art). He is evolving as a filmmaker at PBS, learning from trial and error and others' work: "Every project that I've done, I've learned so much more than I did before...I was just discovering things as I went.... At my PBS internship I watched 250 documentaries... so I've seen all different styles of how to set up a film. So [I've learned] that there's more than one way to create a documentary. For example, the standard sit-down interview style is only one way to go about this. Stories and documentaries can be told visually without ever having somebody sit down on camera for an interview, and I find that fascinating, and something to explore."

Throop's future plans and challenges? "Ideally I would like to do documentary film, but it's the practical side of trying to afford living in the city while also trying to pursue my career [that will be difficult]."

Throop's advice? All students studying abroad should document their experiences—even "Vines" and "Vimeo" are good for sharing stories.

Throop concluded with a small piece of advice from his time with PBS. An interviewer must gain the trust of his or her subject to elicit authentic information. Observing one of the POV documentaries, Throop recalled a remarkable example: In a "documentary on child trafficking in Cambodia, one character is an *actual* child trafficker, but [because he trusted the interviewer] he totally opened up on camera."

— Jen Hoffer '16



## Documentarians on Campus:

### Professor David Gyscek - Art Department

*In Spring 2015, Professor Gyscek will teach a photography course entitled "Picturing Identity." Lisa Fierstein '16 connected with Prof. Gyscek for his views on documentary, photography, and the details on this exciting new course.*



#### In your opinion, in what ways do photography and documentary studies intersect?

On a very basic level, all photography has an aspect of documentation of the real in that it indexes the thing at which the camera is pointed. Even photography that is highly staged or constructed is, strictly speaking, a documentation—not necessarily a documentation of the subject that is staged, but a documentation of the staging of that subject.

#### Can you give an example of a photograph that best captures documentary-style photography?

Along the lines of my assertion above, look at the [Pulitzer Prize winning photograph from the Kent State Massacre](#) in 1971 by John Paul Filo and the recreation of that image by contemporary artist Carrie Mae Weems who recreated that image by staging it (and allowing the staging to be seen in the image) in her series from 2008, Constructing History.

#### The class you are teaching in Spring 2015, "Picturing Identity" is centered on photographing one's personal identity; In addition, will your course incorporate teachings of documentary photography?

While Picturing Identity will be primarily working from the fine arts tradition, as I indicated above, there is a lot of overlap, and in my estimation, false boundaries placed between various genres of photography. We will be exploring the nature of identity from a wide array of perspectives including the documentary. In other words, there will be parts of the class that will focus on telling stories about the self (and the other) through straight-forward, documentary style photography, while other parts that will approach issues of identity through photography's capacity to construct an image through staging, performance, manipulation, etc.

*David Gyscek is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Arts Department, and holds an MFA from Goldsmiths College, University of London. His work investigates the space between reality and fantasy--a space that photography is uniquely positioned to engage.*

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MANY thanks to the Fall Newsletter Team:

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